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ABSTRACT

Having recognized that young people under 25 years of age were among the state's greatest resources, the Louisiana Workforce Commission convened ten state agencies to form the Youth Policy Network (LYPN) to develop an interagency collaboration to help Louisiana youth acquire the necessary skills for success in education and employment. The LYPN identified essential assumptions, strategies and outcomes that sustain healthy growth and development for youth, such as the following: (1) investment in youth programs is vital to the state's economic prosperity; (2) all youth learn in the context of both family and community; (3) community development approaches should emphasize protective factors and decrease risk factors for youth; and, (4) youth development is holistic and all involved agencies must cooperate and not act alone. These three populations were identified as most vulnerable among Louisiana's youth: (1) 13 year olds; (2) out of school youth; and, (3) youth aging out of foster care. Foremost among the recommendations were a recognition of the need for greater agency accountability and attention to stakeholders. Future goals of the LYPN were described as increasing the capacity building of regional organizations working with youth, implementation of logic models developed by LYPN, and development of a collaborative, partner-based strategic action plan. A list and description of LYPN members is appended. (AJ)

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LOUISIANA'S BLUEPRINT for investing in youth

a plan, a path to follow
a recommendation
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result that
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without such
projected plan with its details,
a map to creating a desired
result, a vision for the creation of
something that doesn't yet exist

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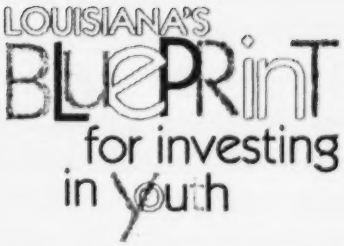
LOUISIANA'S
BLUEPRINT
for investing
in youth

Table of Contents

I. Introduction 5

II. Why Develop a State Blueprint for Investing in Youth? 7

III. History: How Did We Begin This Work? 9
Creating the Louisiana Youth Policy Network
Measuring Impacts: LYPN Logic Models

IV. What is the State Blueprint? 13
Vision
Assumptions
Strategies
Outcomes and Long-term Impacts

V. Implementing the Louisiana Blueprint for Investing in Youth 25
Capacity Building
Ongoing Evaluation
Collaborative Partnership-based Action Plan

Louisiana Youth Policy Network Members 27

Acknowledgements 30

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As Louisiana enters the 21st century, it is imperative that we develop a clear vision for investing in our children and young people -- a vision that provides a fundamental statement of our shared values, expectations, and objectives for Louisiana on behalf of its children and young people. Then, we must commit to act on this vision, creating more effective approaches that align our systems and resources, fully addressing our state's challenges facing youth. Finally, we must implement these approaches in a comprehensive manner

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Introduction

As Louisiana enters the 21st century, it is imperative that we develop a clear vision for investing in our children and young people — a vision that provides a fundamental statement of our shared values, expectations, and objectives for Louisiana on behalf of its children and young people. Then, we must commit to act on this vision, creating more effective approaches that align our systems and resources, fully addressing our state's challenges facing youth. Finally, we must implement these approaches in a comprehensive manner.

To craft the *State Blueprint for Investing in Youth*, the Louisiana Youth Policy Network (LYPN), a collaboration of ten state-level agencies, has worked diligently over the past two years to:

- Take a fresh look at the concerns and challenges facing Louisiana's children, youth, and their families;
- Describe what it takes to preserve Louisiana's greatest natural resource — youth who are nurtured by caring adults, given opportunities to learn and succeed in work and school, who receive support and protection when needed, and who are actively engaged in their communities;
- Identify the resources and infrastructure supports needed to invest in our youth; and
- Provide a medium for unprecedented state-level and local-level collaboration on behalf of youth and their families.

The Louisiana Youth Policy Network recognizes that no one government agency can meet the needs of the children and youth population. We believe that youth who are nurtured by caring adults, given opportunities to learn and succeed in work and school, who receive support and protection when needed and who are actively engaged in service to the community are Louisiana's greatest natural resource. These youth represent Louisiana's competitive edge for economic growth and prosperity

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Why develop a state blueprint for investing in youth?

The Louisiana Youth Policy Network recognizes that no one government agency can meet the needs of its vulnerable children and youth populations. We believe that youth who are nurtured by caring adults, given opportunities to learn and succeed in work and school, who receive support and protection when needed and who are actively engaged in service to the community are Louisiana's greatest natural resource. These youth represent Louisiana's competitive edge for economic growth and prosperity.

Making sound investments in the total well-being of youth, ages 0-24, moves Louisiana toward the economic prosperity and quality of life envisioned in the state's economic development master plan: Vision 2020. However, creating such a 21st century youth development system in Louisiana will require managing complex key elements of change: shared vision, knowledge, skills and abilities to implement; adequate resources and incentives to change; well-developed action plans; and ongoing evaluation for use as a management and learning tool.

The *Louisiana Blueprint for Investing in Youth* proposes strategies for policy makers and implementers to consider in shaping this new, world-class youth development system. It is the Network's hope that this *Blueprint* will provide the foundation for a statewide dialogue about youth development. We intend it to spur the best thinking of parents and caregivers, youth, agency staff, community leaders and citizens, elected and appointed officials, policymakers, and others. This working document and other related papers will be available in print form and via our website:

http://www.layouthnet.org.

Under the leadership of General M.J. "Mike" Foster, the Louisiana Workforce Commission entered the hands of ten state agencies in late 1999. The purpose was to develop an interagency collaboration to help Louisiana youth acquire the necessary skills for success in education and employment

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History: How did we begin this work?

Under the leadership of Governor M.J. "Mike" Foster, the Louisiana Workforce Commission convened the heads of ten state agencies in late 1999. The purpose was to develop an interagency collaboration to help Louisiana youth acquire the necessary skills for success in education and employment.

Creating Louisiana's Youth Policy Network

In light of the challenges facing Louisiana youth, a coalition of youth-serving state agencies formed the Louisiana Youth Policy Network. Network members include the Departments of Social Services, Labor, Education, Public Safety and Corrections, Health and Hospitals and the Board of Regents; Offices of the Lieutenant Governor and the Attorney General; the Children's Cabinet; and the Governor's Office of the Workforce Commission/ School-to-Work.

The Youth Policy Network team meets regularly to share promising practices, develop new collaborative initiatives, and to monitor progress in achieving Louisiana's vision for investing in youth. The Network reviews economic and social demographic youth data and emerging national trends. Based on this information, the Network proposes broad-based strategies and initiatives to promote positive youth development.

A few of the Network's accomplishments to date include:

- Louisiana's selection by the National Governors' Association to participate in a national network of ten states to advance youth development plans and strategies.
- Louisiana was awarded a $360,000 Youth Development State Collaboration Demonstration project grant from the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services to help create a strong youth development system.
- The Network piloted the state's first joint youth development strategic planning grant initiative, with the support of three funding streams – Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), School-to-Work and the Youth Development Collaboration grant.
- The launch of Louisiana's youth development website http://www.layouthnet.org, containing regional (asset-based) resource directories.

Measuring Impacts through an Ongoing Evaluation Process: The LYPN logic models

The Louisiana Youth Policy Network recognizes that, today, Louisiana youth- serving agencies are managing in a time of complex change, requiring continuous improvement in both quality and accountability. New legislation guiding workforce preparation programs and education, significant demographic changes in the population being served, dramatic shifts in the labor market, and an increased focus on results-based accountability have accelerated Louisiana's change management process.

This, in turn, led the Youth Policy Network to embark on an ongoing evaluation process. The first step taken this past year was the development of a series of Logic Models or pictures about how the Youth Development Initiative works — at both the state and regional levels. The logic models presented on the following pages provide a picture of how the Youth Development Initiative works and links outcomes with strategies and the assumptions and principles valued by key stakeholders.

In order to create the Logic Models and subsequent evaluation measures and outcome, the LYPN is working with Susan P. Curnan, Management Professor and Chair, MBA Program in Children, Youth, Families at the Heller Graduate School of Brandeis University.

The text of the models was drawn from three primary sources: regional team discussions held at an Evaluation Briefing Meeting conducted by Professor Curnan; review and analysis of related materials/proposals; and an initial meeting with the Workforce Commission staff and Network members.

The logic models provide a focal point for discussion. They can be used to explain Louisiana's Youth Development Initiative and programs to others and to create a sense of ownership among stakeholders. Further refinement of the logic models may require stakeholders to work together to affirm and/or clarify the underlying rationale and the conditions under which success is most likely to be achieved. Gaps in activities, expected outcomes and assumptions can be identified, resulting in changes being made based on consensus building and a logical process rather than on short-term opportunity, personalities, politics or ideology.

The logic models shown on the following two pages also provide the foundation for the *State's Blueprint for Investing in Youth.*

Logic Model Part I: Youth Development Initiative/State Level Blueprint

Louisiana Youth Policy Network

A collaboration of state-level partners including: Governor's Office of the Workforce Commission/School-to-Work • Department of Social Services • Department of Education Department of Public Safety and Corrections • Children's Cabinet • Board of Regents • Department of Labor • Office of Lieutenant Governor • Department of Health and Hospitals • Office of Attorney General

***Mission:** Building Capacity for the Positive Development of Louisiana's Youth. Specifically, "to create a system that provides the right interventions at the right time ensuring Louisiana youth acquire the necessary skills for success in education and employment and businesses gain a skilled workforce."*

FOR WHOM	ASSUMPTIONS (Theory of Change)	STRATEGIES	OUTCOMES	IMPACT

All youth in the state of Louisiana with a particular focus on three vulnerable populations:
• 13 year olds
• Out-of-school youth
• Youth aging out of foster care
 	
All youth-related agencies, schools, businesses and policy makers.
	• Louisiana Youth Policy Network and respective agencies recognize no one agency can meet the needs of vulnerable populations and agree to collaborate to address the following major challenges facing LA youth:
	  • A high percentage of Louisiana youth are not engaged in education, training or work, measures related to our state's pervasive poverty.
	  • A serious disconnect exists between public youth-serving agencies, schools and private sector employers; No one takes responsibility for developing our large cohort of out-of-school youth.
	  • LA's "reluctance to change" hinders the development of effective youth policies and the translation of research into quality program practice.
	• Youth who are nurtured by caring adults, given opportunities to learn and succeed in work and school, who receive support and protection when needed and who are actively engaged in service to the community are LA's greatest natural resource—"LA's competitive edge."
	
	• By making an investment in the total well-being of youth—ages 0-24—LA moves toward the economic prosperity and quality of life envisioned in the state's master plan: "Vision 2020."
	
	• Creating a 21st century youth development system in LA requires managing complex change by addressing key elements of change: shared vision, knowledge, skills and abilities to implement; adequate resources and incentives to change; well-developed action plan and ongoing evaluation for use as management and learning tool.
		Strategic Goals:
		• To work together, across agencies and funding streams, to devise youth development policy recommendations and strategies that have long-term systemic impact.
		• To make policy recommendations regarding youth development to the governor, the legislature, Children's Cabinet and the Workforce Commission.
		• To develop state and regional evaluation capacity for heightened accountability and for ongoing management and learning among stakeholders.
		
		Short-term Strategies Include:
		1 Award regional youth development planning grants to facilitate collaborative delivery system organized around 4 themes: preparing children for school, helping children and youth succeed in school, improving life chances of youth/young adults, strengthening positive development of youth
		2 Invest/support regional convening of key stakeholders to prepare strategic plan
		3 Support creation of regional (asset-based) resource directories.
		
		Long-term Strategies for Managing Complex Change, Capacity Building and Collaborative Leadership:
		Facilitate knowledge generation, application & dissemination for regions on:
		• Best practice in youth and community development
		• Professional development and training for policy makers and practitioners
		• Developmentally appropriate system/program design
		• Governance and leadership strategies/options
		• Financing strategies and resource development
		• Strategic communication and development of public will
		• Business-school-community partnership development
		• Results-based accountability and evaluation
		
		Systems Change and Policy Development:
		Assist policy makers and implementers to acquire youth development knowledge and skills in the interest of establishing policy to protect and enhance the value of youth, families and communities in Louisiana.
			System/Policy Outcomes:
			1. Reinvigorated youth-centered policies shared across the state partners in the Louisiana Youth Policy Network.
			
			2. Effective partnerships and collaboratives among youth-serving institutions across the state, including public and private sector.
			
			3. Increased capacity of regional organizations and agencies to work together and implement high quality, highly accountable programs for youth.
			
			4. Widespread public knowledge and awareness about Louisiana's regional youth and the supports and opportunities they need to thrive.
				Youth:
				• Successful, prepared, contributing youth in the state of Louisiana
				
				Systems/Policy:
				• New infrastructure for world-class youth development systems in Louisiana.
				
				• High performance, entrepreneurial and mission-driven collaboratives in regions across the state - "providing the right interventions at the right time. . ."
				
				• Economic prosperity and high educational attainment in Louisiana.

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Logic Model Part 2: Youth Development Initiative/Regional Level Blueprint

Louisiana's Youth Development Initiative

Mission: *To create a system that provides the right interventions at the right time ensuring Louisiana youth acquire the necessary skills for success in education and employment, and businesses gain a skilled workforce.*

FOR WHOM	ASSUMPTIONS (Theory of Change)	STRATEGIES	OUTCOMES	IMPACT
All youth in the state of Louisiana with a particular focus on three vulnerable populations: • 13 year olds • Out-of-school youth • Youth aging out of foster care Each region to determine specific youth target population based on local conditions and circumstances	• Investing in our youth and preparing them for success is vital to economic prosperity and improved quality of life for youth and communities. Despite sustained economic growth, Louisiana youth have not fared well economically or in educational attainment, i.e., • 4 in 10 LA 9th graders do not graduate from high school • LA ranks 47th in the nation in terms of the % of youth, aged 19, who are either enrolled in school or employed • LA ranks 2nd in nation for % of high school drop outs • Academic failure cited as highest risk factor for sample of LA youth • All youth can learn and do learn in the context of families and communities. We can create conditions where each can thrive and attain the immutable building blocks for healthy personalities: sense of belonging (attachment); mastery (achievement); independence (autonomy); generosity (altruism). • Positive youth and community development approaches which aim to increase protective factors and decrease risk factors and view youth as resources rather than problems and build on youth strengths show promise and should be implemented to best prepare youth for the future. • Creating communities that are safe, just and compassionate, where youth are valued and engaged in full and healthy ways require involving them in the relationships, programs and institutions that impact their lives. • The new youth development system is 1 dedicated to the success of all youth, 2 designed in partnership with young people, 3 locally driven, 4 made up of committed partners, 5 responsive to business needs, 6 built on promising practices (evidence of success), 7 committed to continuous improvement, and 8 includes an emphasis on out-of-school youth. • No one agency or sector working alone, whether it be nonprofit, government or business, can address the holistic development of youth. Developing our youth will require all youth-oriented programs and providers and the private sector to rally together in support of a vision for positive youth development	**Core programs in regions to be organized around four themes:** • Preparing children for school • Helping children & youth succeed in school • Improving the life chances of youth • Strengthening the positive development of youth. **Programs include some combination of:** • Workforce preparation/ employability skills development • Education skills development • Life skills development/self knowledge & esteem building • Knowledge/Access to community resources & information (health, housing, etc.) • Career Pathway development & work experience • Mentoring • Peer-to-Peer networking and relationship building • Case management and counseling • Community Volunteerism Regions develop new youth development system by addressing key elements associated with managing complex change: i.e., shared vision; knowledge, skills and abilities to implement; adequate resources and incentives to change; well-developed action plan; and ongoing evaluation for use as management and learning tool.	**Youth Outcomes:** 1. Education foundation skills and aspirations for post-secondary education/training 2. Employability skills and work place experience 3. Perception of opportunity/ future (Life/Career Vision and Goals) 4. Decreases in risk factors/risky behavior (teen pregnancy, incarceration) 5. Youth leadership development decision-making opportunities 6. Civic participation and contributions **Community/Regional Level Outcomes:** 1. Youth connected to support networks - family, school, CBOs 2. Youth and families with comprehensive health services 3. Community-wide efforts to support and engage youth in healthy development and decision making 4. Effective partnerships and collaboratives among youth-serving institutions, including public and private sector 5. High quality, highly accountable, results-oriented youth programs utilizing positive youth development approaches 6. Self-evaluation capacity/data used for decision making.	**Youth:** • Successful, prepared, contributing youth in the state of Louisiana • With "immutable building blocks for healthy development," i.e., youth are prepared for school, succeeding in school, have improved life chances and sense of self. **Community:** • Safe, just and healthy communities where young people are engaged in full and healthy ways. • High performance, entrepreneurial and mission-driven collaboratives in regions across the state - "providing the right interventions at the right time. . . " • Economic prosperity and high educational attainment in Louisiana

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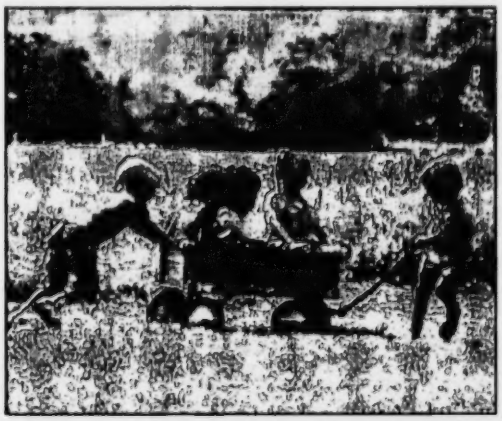
What is the State Blueprint?

The *Louisiana Blueprint for Investing in Youth* identifies essential assumptions, strategies and outcomes to create a comprehensive system that sustains healthy growth and development for youth. In addition, the Blueprint provides a framework for managing the complex change process required to successfully implement this new youth development system.

The *State Blueprint* documents the work of this collaboration and presents comprehensive youth development strategies at both the state and regional levels.



The *Louisiana Blueprint for Investing in Youth* specifically articulates the following:

- **Louisiana's vision for investing in young people**
- **The fundamental assumptions that unify our efforts in behalf of youth and families.** *These assumptions include the common values and ideals that undergird our comprehensive strategic goals and outcomes.*
- **The strategies and processes we plan to put in place, ensuring youth acquire the necessary skills for success** *in education and employment, and businesses gain a skilled workforce.*
- **The evolving outcomes and long-term impacts we expect to achieve through the creation of our youth development system.** *Using state and regional level logic models as a guide, we will be able to chart our progress and measure our success, thereby crafting sound youth-centered policy recommendations.*

The Louisiana Blueprint for Investing in Youth identifies essential connections, strategies and outcomes to create a comprehensive system that sustains healthy growth and development for youth. In addition, the Blueprint provides a framework for managing the complex change process required to successfully implement this new youth development system.

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Louisiana's Vision for Investing In Young People

The Central Louisiana School-to-Work Partnership pulled together employers, Tech-Prep Coordinators, Workforce Investment Act-Title I program directors, in addition to School-to-Work practitioners in the region. In the two-day "think tank" meeting, participants hammered out a progressive vision to guide the development of Louisiana's emerging youth system. The vision and guiding principles were then reviewed and further refined by a state-level workgroup, convened by the Louisiana Workforce Commission. This workgroup consisted of representatives from state agencies, local government, organized labor, community-based organizations, statewide nonprofit organizations, education, and youth.

After this process, the system framework was approved by the Louisiana Workforce Commission. Because of this comprehensive process, the Network believes that the vision represents significant consensus on the direction Louisiana needs to take to address the challenges that face youth.

Louisiana's Vision
for investing in young people:
We will create a system that provides the right interventions at the right time ensuring Louisiana youth acquire the necessary skills for success in education and employment, and businesses gain a skilled workforce.

From this vision, the Youth Policy Network partners identified twenty-six strategies under the eight principles that guide our comprehensive youth system:

Guiding Principles/Strategies for the System:

A system dedicated to the success of all young people.
All young people will have access to a wide range of "youth-friendly" services, activities, and educational opportunities, which provide "just in time" service interventions, training and supports that guarantee successful transition into adulthood.

Strategy

A. Ensure young people have access to a wide range of "youth-friendly" services, activities and educational opportunities, that improve the chances of a successful transition into adulthood.

B. Provide multiple opportunities for youth to have positive interactions with peers and knowledgeable, caring adults in success-oriented environments.

C. Create and strengthen agency policies that support positive youth development.

D. Foster an educational system that is tailored to individual student needs and committed to high student achievement.

E. Ensure that all youth are prepared for post secondary education, training, or work.

A system designed in partnership with young people
Young people are active partners in the design of the system and feel a keen sense of ownership in their community. Youth are empowered to take leadership roles in defining the full range of services that are responsive to both their needs and wants.

Strategy

A. Provide opportunities for all youth to develop leadership skills.

B. Involve youth in decision-making, policy-making, and strategic planning processes on state, local, and community issues.

A system that includes an emphasis on out-of-school youth
For those young people who complete high school or drop out of school, we will establish a rapid attachment to work not only for their first job, but also for their second job, third job and beyond. This includes interventions which help young people attain, retain, and advance to better jobs.

Strategy

A. Build awareness and advocacy for out-of-school youth among state officials, educators, and community partners.

B. Target available federal and state funding, wherever possible, to initiatives that work with out-of-school youth.

C. Establish a centralized network of services aimed at identifying, reclaiming, and engaging out-of-school youth.

A system that is locally driven
Proactive coalitions, including Workforce Investment Boards and Youth Councils, will help spearhead the governance of the system by convening partners, identifying and addressing youth issues, and advocating strong youth policy and programming practices.

Strategy

A. Provide support, technical assistance, and resources to facilitate the development of regional and locally driven systems.

B. Garner input and feedback from local communities regularly, with the commitment to utilize such input for system adjustment and improvement

C. Promote regional- and local-level system building and network building among program and community partners.

A system of committed partners
No single agency or system partner can single-handedly achieve our vision. All partners must come to the table with their expertise in youth programming, putting aside individual interests. We must develop strong linkages among partners to optimize human and financial resources, create a continuum of service interventions and leverage funds to ensure a variety of educational, developmental, and employment-related activities and service interventions are accessible to all youth.

Strategy

A. Garner and use youth partners' input in program design, review, implementation, and evaluation

B. Create a matrix that identifies each system partner's role, resources, and program scope (to be updated annually).

A system responsive to business needs
In order for our system to lead to quality outcomes, local business participation is essential in the design and delivery of programming activities. Business can greatly benefit the system by articulating the skills young people need for success in the work world, sharing how those skills are used in real world situations, and helping us understand the skills needed as young people develop their individual career paths.

Strategy

A. Use employer input and feedback to develop and gauge the success of workforce education and training programs and youth initiatives.

B. Help broaden the knowledge base and understanding among employers of positive youth development.

C. Provide opportunities for employers to partner with our youth programs and initiatives.

A system built on promising practices

Louisiana has invested a great deal in changing the way we do business as it relates to youth education and development. From education reform efforts, such as Tech Prep and School-to-Work, to employment and training activities, many innovative designs and practices have proven successful. Our goal now is to bring together all the quality programming practices of Louisiana's emerging youth investment system as well as build on lessons learned from other states and communities.

Strategy

A. Develop widely accepted criteria to determine which youth programs and initiatives can be considered "promising practices."

B. Disseminate youth development "best practices and programs" among agency partners and to local communities.

C. Develop a youth system infrastructure for ongoing research and knowledge.

A system committed to continuous improvement

The needs of young people are constantly moving targets. What we develop as a system today will not be the system of tomorrow. Partners in the system must commit to collect feedback from its customer groups and use it to make modifications to program design and service interventions. We must start with the best of what we know about youth development today and make it even better for the future.

Strategy

A. Develop an integrated management information system that documents youth progress.

B. Provide ongoing, joint professional staff development opportunities.

C. Develop agency policies that promote flexibility and allow for program adjustment according to evaluation findings and performance data

D. Promote local- and regional-level system building and network building among program and community partners.

Fundamental Assumptions *that unify our efforts on behalf of youth and families*

The following are the fundamental assumptions underlying *Louisiana's Blueprint for Investing in Youth*:

- Investing in our youth and preparing them for success is vital to economic prosperity and an improved quality of life for youth and communities.
- All youth can learn and do learn in the context of families and communities. We can create the conditions where each can thrive and attain the immutable building blocks for healthy personalities: sense of belonging (attachment); mastery (achievement); independence (autonomy); and generosity (altruism).
- Positive youth and community development approaches (which aim to increase protective factors and decrease risk factors) view youth as resources rather than problems; and build on their strengths show promise and should be implemented to best prepare youth for the future.
- Creating safe, just and compassionate communities, where youth are valued and engaged in full and healthy ways, requires involving them in the programs and institutions that impact their lives.
- No one agency or sector working alone, whether it be nonprofit, government, or business, can address the holistic development of youth. Developing our youth will require both the public sector and the private sector working together to achieve the state's vision for positive youth development.
- Creating a 21st century youth development system in Louisiana requires managing complex change by addressing these key elements: shared vision; knowledge, skills and abilities to implement; adequate resources and incentives to change; a well-developed action plan; and ongoing evaluation for use as a management and learning tool.

The Strategies & Processes for Achieving Our Vision for Youth

The overarching goals of the Youth Policy Network are:

- To work together, across agencies and funding streams, to devise youth development policy recommendations and strategies that have long-term systemic impact and are research-based.
- To make sound policy recommendations regarding youth development to the governor, the legislature, the Children's Cabinet and the Workforce Commission.
- To build state and regional capacity for heightened accountability and for ongoing management and learning among stakeholders.

State-level Strategies

To achieve these goals, the short-term, state-level strategies have included:

- awarding regional youth development planning grants to help communities organize around four themes: preparing children for school, helping children and youth succeed in school, improving life chances of youth/young adults, and strengthening positive development of youth;

- investing/supporting regional convenings of key stakeholders to prepare regional strategic plans and provide input into the *State Blueprint for Investing in Youth*,
- supporting creation of regional (asset-based) resource directories.

In the long-term, state-level strategies for managing this complex change will include capacity-building and collaborative leadership development in the following areas:

- Promising practice in youth and community development
- Professional development and training for policy makers and practitioners
- Developmentally appropriate system / program design
- Governance and leadership strategies/options
- Financing strategies and resource development
- Strategic communication and development of public will
- Business-school-community partnership development
- Results-based accountability and evaluation

Regional-level strategies

At the regional level, we recommend that communities organize their core programs and service delivery systems around four broad themes:

- Preparing children for school
- Helping children and youth succeed in school
- Improving the life chances of youth
- Strengthening the positive development of youth

We further recommend that communities provide youth programs that include some combination of the following:

- Workforce preparation/employability skills development
- Basic skills development
- Life skills development/self-knowledge and esteem building
- Knowledge and access to community resources and information (health, housing, etc.)
- Career pathway development and work experience
- Mentoring
- Peer-to-peer networking and relationship building
- Case management and counseling
- Community volunteerism

Regions can create new youth development systems by addressing the key elements associated with managing this complex change. Those key elements are:

- Establishing a shared vision
- Providing the knowledge, skills and abilities to implement change
- Ensuring there are adequate resources and incentives to change
- Creating a well-developed action plan
- Promoting ongoing evaluation as a management and learning tool

System/Policy level strategies

At the system level, we recommend that:

- Policy makers and implementers acquire youth development knowledge and skills to establish policy that protects and enhances the value of youth, families and communities in Louisiana.

Outcomes & Impacts

Louisiana's youth development initiative is aimed at achieving outcomes at multiple levels: youth-level outcomes, community/regional-level outcomes, and system/policy-level outcomes.

The following highlight key outcomes to be achieved at each level.

Youth Outcomes

1. Basic skills and aspirations for post secondary education/training
2. Employability skills and work place experience

3. Perception of opportunity/future (Life/Career Vision and Goals)
4. Decreases in risk factors/risky behavior (teen pregnancy, incarceration)
5. Youth leadership development/ decision-making opportunities
6. Civic participation and contributions

Community/Regional Level Outcomes

1. Youth connected to support networks
2. Youth and families with comprehensive health services
3. Community-wide efforts that support and engage youth in healthy development and decision making
4. Effective partnerships and collaboratives among youth-serving institutions, including public and private sector
5. High quality, highly accountable, results-oriented youth programs utilizing positive youth development approaches.
6. Self-evaluation capacity/data used for decision making.

System/Policy Outcomes

1. Reinvigorated youth-centered policies shared by the agency partners in the Louisiana Youth Policy Network
2. Effective partnerships and collaboratives among youth-serving institutions across the state, including public and private sector.
3. Increased capacity of regional organizations and agencies to work together and implement high quality, highly accountable programs for youth.
4. Widespread public knowledge and awareness about Louisiana's youth and the supports and opportunities they need to thrive.

Long-term Impacts

Youth

- Successful, prepared youth, contributing in the state of Louisiana
- With "immutable building blocks for healthy development," i.e., youth are prepared for school, succeed in school, have improved life chances and sense of self.

Community

- Safe, just and healthy communities where young people are engaged in full and healthy ways.
- High performance, entrepreneurial and mission-driven collaboratives across the state — "providing the right interventions at the right time..."

Systems/Policy

- Economic prosperity and high educational attainment in Louisiana
- New infrastructure for world-class youth development systems in Louisiana.
- High performance, entrepreneurial and mission-driven collaboratives in regions across the state — "providing the right interventions at the right time..."

The Louisiana Blueprint for Investing in Health will be broadly distributed to communities throughout the state. The Health Policy Network will continue to provide resources and technical assistance to implement the vision and strategies defined in the Blueprint. At the national, state, regional, and local levels, LHPN member agencies will work to strengthen their shared vision, knowledge, skills, and abilities to implement change, resources and incentives to change, and action plans and ongoing evaluation

Implementing the Louisiana Blueprint for Investing in Youth

The *Louisiana Blueprint for Investing in Youth* will be broadly distributed to communities throughout the state. The Youth Policy Network will continue to provide resources and technical assistance to implement the vision and strategies defined in the *Blueprint*. At the national, state, regional, and local levels, LYPN member agencies will work to strengthen their shared vision; knowledge, skills, and abilities to implement change; resources and incentives to change; and action plans and ongoing evaluation.

Through town meetings, focus groups, and Internet-based surveys, we will seek broad input and build consensus on the *Blueprint*. At the same time, we will continue to review data and research about what is needed and what works. We will develop a series of communication documents to describe what we are learning and to build statewide commitment to our goals. Finally, we will produce a report that details our successes, our findings, and serves as a policy development tool for the future.

As we move forward, we will focus on three key areas:

1. Capacity Building
2. Ongoing Evaluation
3. Collaborative, Partnership-based Strategic Action Plan

1. Capacity Building

Concrete action to mobilize communities within a regional framework will serve as the centerpiece of the Network's activities to support the *State Blueprint*. Acting within our agencies' roles, scopes, and missions, we will support this work by identifying the real-world operational approaches that work at the local level, and supply the tools and expert resources needed to sustain these efforts. It is our goal to increase the capacity of regional organizations and institutions to work together and implement high quality, highly accountable programs for youth.

2. Ongoing Evaluation

The Louisiana Youth Policy Network (LYPN) is committed to continuous improvement through an ongoing evaluation process that documents successes and assesses progress and stumbling blocks along the way. The first major step

was to develop a series of Logic Models, or pictures, about how the *Blueprint* works at both the state and regional levels. These can be found on page 12 and 13 of this booklet. A good logic model truly aligns assumptions, activities and outcomes, and therefore, provides a powerful base from which to conduct ongoing self-evaluation of the Initiative's benefits and gaps. By using the Louisiana Youth Development Initiative Logic Models as part of the internal evaluation process, partners will be able to stay focused on the young people served, connect interim outcomes to long-term impact, link activities and processes to outcomes and keep underlying assumptions at the forefront of their minds. The next step in the process will be to generate indicators and performance measures for the outcomes.

3. Collaborative, Partnership-based Strategic Action Plan

We believe that increased investment in Louisiana's youth will ensure their success and prosperity in the 21st century. The Network partners will encourage policymakers and community stakeholders to make strategic and valuable contributions to the youth system. It will challenge these policymakers and stakeholders to undertake the task of engaging their communities and regions in deliberative dialogue, exploring several basic questions:[1]

1. Of what value is solving this problem to us?
2. What are the costs and consequences for acting on the youth development issue?
3. What are the costs and consequences for not acting on the youth development issue?
4. What are we willing to do to solve the problem?
5. What trade-offs are we willing or unwilling to make?

This *Blueprint* only provides a foundation for community and statewide dialogue. It does not represent the breadth of ideas that an integration of new knowledge and feedback from local communities can offer.

We anxiously await your input and ideas on how we can collectively make wise investments in our youth.

[1]*Adapted from David Mathews,* Is There a Public for Public Schools? *(Dayton, Ohio: Kettering Foundation, 1996)*

Louisiana Youth Policy Network Members

Office of the Attorney General
The Drug Policy Section provides statewide training on underage drinking and driving prevention through the *"U-Drink, U-Drive, U-Walk"* campaign; offers technical assistance and training to local school districts and law enforcement across the state in the area of school safety and provides leadership in the fight to reduce underage tobacco use.
The Section, on behalf of the Attorney General, also presents an annual Criminal Justice Award to local organizations that successfully impact the lives of children.

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Louisiana Board of Regents
The Board of Regents is the coordinating body for all of postsecondary education in the state. As indicated in its *Master Plan for Postsecondary Education* the Board recognizes its role in aiding young people to make a smooth transition from secondary school to postsecondary education and subsequently, lifelong learning. To that end, the Board of Regents has invested considerable resources in several initiatives aimed to fulfill that role. Some initiatives include implementing Counseling for High Skills (a career exploration and counseling tool) and developing the EPAS (Educational Planning and Assessment System) project, in partnership with the Department of Education. In addition, Regents has provided substantial leadership in statewide assessment and articulation efforts between secondary and postsecondary education.

Contact: *Dr. Lisa Smith-Vosper*
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Children's Cabinet — Office of The Governor
The Children's Cabinet was re-created in 1998 to provide statewide leadership among state-level agencies and departments with youth-serving programs. The cabinet-level secretaries of the departments of Social Services, Health and Hospitals, Public Safety and Corrections, Labor and the superintendent of education serve on the Cabinet, in addition to other required members.

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Executive Director
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Department of Education — Office of School and Community Support
The Family, Career, and Technical Education division (FCTE) of this office strives to provide all students with a challenging, relevant and meaningful education, helping them become lifelong learners and productive citizens. Initiatives include adult education and family literacy (for youth and adults 16+ and older); U. S. Department of Education Career Clusters and implementation of the Career Options Law, High Schools That Work, and industry-based certifications. In addition, the FCTE has a partnership with the Department of Labor to provide technical assistance and resources to the 18 Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Councils in the state.

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Department of Labor — Office of Workforce Development

The Office of Workforce Development manages the *Workforce Investment Act Title I youth program*. The *Workforce Investment Act Title I youth program* replaced the former Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) summer youth employment program. The new program offers youth ten required program elements, ranging from tutoring and mentoring to employment and counseling. In this capacity, the Office provides significant leadership and guidance to the eighteen (18) workforce investment boards and their Youth Councils. Among their investments have been providing seed capital for youth one-stop initiatives, consulting services, and statewide meetings on youth issues.

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Department of Public Safety and Corrections — Office of Youth Development

The Department has launched a full-scale effort to develop a primary crime prevention program that incorporates initiatives designed to positively impact children from birth to age ten. While duty bound as a state correctional system to protect public safety and promote order, the Department has expanded its mission and impact. The Children's Initiative has three basic components: (1) *Parenting Skills Program*; (2) *Steps to Success*; and (3) *Character Counts.*

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Department of Social Services — Office of Family Support

The Office of Family Support performs the services of the state relating to public assistance programs. Its mission is to assist individuals, children and families in meeting their basic human need for economic support and to promote self-sufficiency. The Office of Family Support invests substantial state and federal funding to promote youth well-being. An example of this is its Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, an initiative that contracts with government entities, school-based, faith-based, and nonprofit organizations to provide youth development activities to youth aged 11-19. The program's statewide prevention campaign, *Get R.E.A.L.! - Get Reality Education About Life*, has received national recognition. The Department has also made substantial investments in early childhood education, high school dropout prevention, and basic skills and workforce literacy.

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Department of Health and Hospitals — Office of Addictive Disorders

The Office of Addictive Disorders houses *Louisiana's Partners In Prevention (PIP)* initiative, which funds innovative and effective drug prevention model programs throughout the state. The initiative aims to identify and assess all federal and state substance abuse prevention funding streams and resources within the state, train grassroots communities, coalitions, and practitioners with knowledge and tools on how to use assessment data to drive prevention planning, programming, and evaluation, i.e. risk and protective factors. This $8.4 million federal grant initiative will provide Louisiana with the ability to coordinate, leverage, and collaborate effective prevention strategies. PIP is also charged with development and implementation of a comprehensive, statewide prevention plan, which maximizes resources to address the issues of substance abuse prevention among youth.

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Governor's Office of the Workforce Commission/School-to-Work

The Louisiana Workforce Commission serves as the State Workforce Investment Board within the meaning of the federal Workforce Investment Act. The employer-led, governor-appointed group has as its mission: to transform the state's former approaches to workforce education and training into a systems approach that meets customer needs. The Commission is home to two major youth development system-building initiatives — *Louisiana School-to-Work* and the *State Youth Development Collaboration Grant* initiative.

The School-to-Work initiative has invested over $20 million (over five years) in regional partnerships to create an effective system that ensures students move successfully into the workplace, pursue further learning, and lead productive lives. Activities funded include career academies, teacher externships, out-of-school youth programs, professional staff development, career development institutes and industry-based certifications. The Commission also serves as the convener of the Youth Policy Network members.

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Office of the Lieutenant Governor — Louisiana Serve Commission

The Commission awards grants to organizations and schools that provide educational opportunities for those who make a substantial commitment to community service. The Louisiana Serve Commission serves as the focal point for national service efforts in the state and acts as a clearinghouse for National Service programs operating in Louisiana. Among its programs are AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, America Reads, and Louisiana's Promise. Funding is from the United States Corporation for National Service, established in 1993.

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LYPN MEMBERS (1999-2002)

We gratefully acknowledge Louisiana's leadership for their commitment to the Youth Policy Network and to this project.

Governor M. J. "Mike" Foster, Jr.

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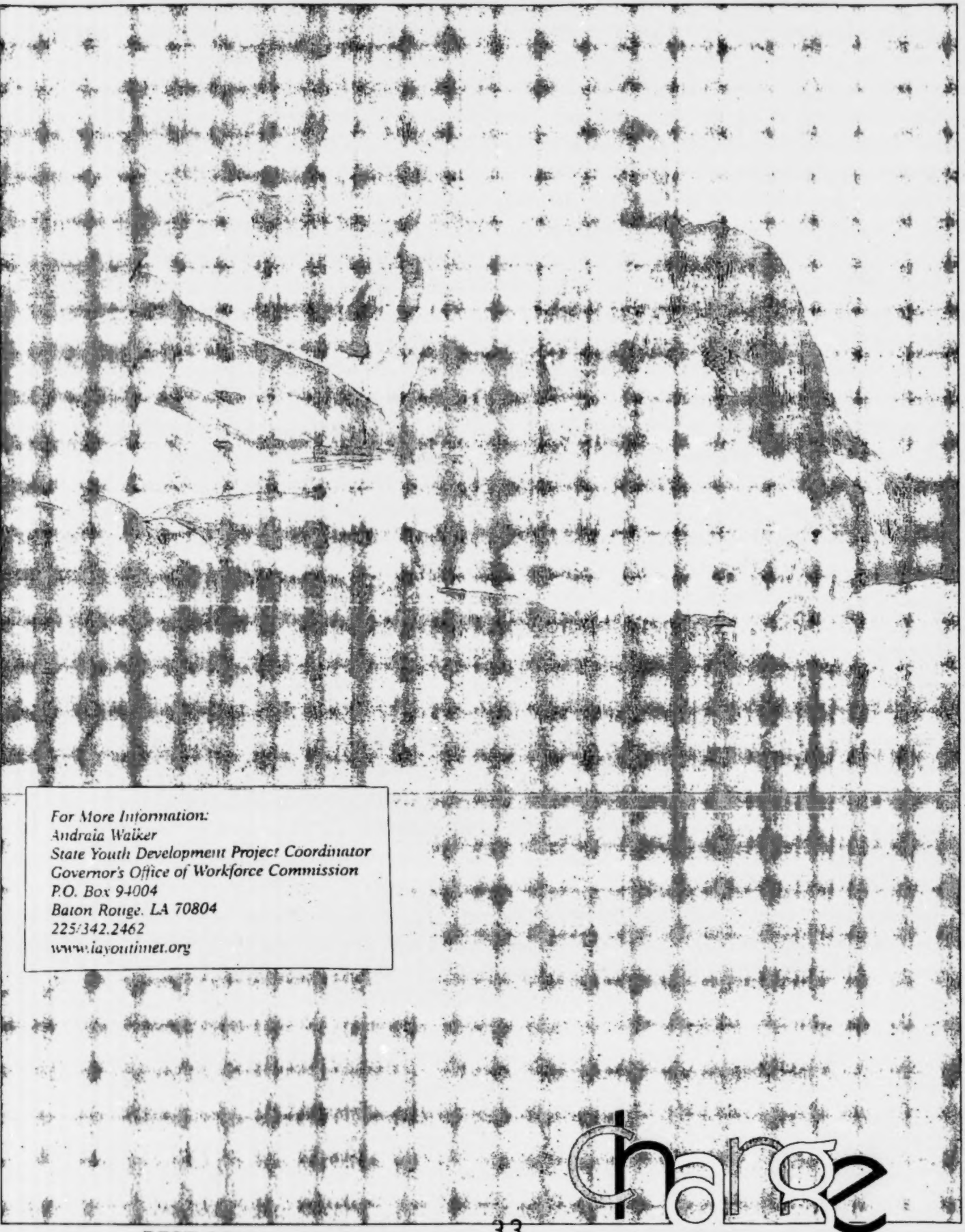

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